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THE THRIFTY FARM FAMILY PLANS ITS CLOTHING BUDGET

A radio talk by Miss Helen Shelby, Clothing Specialist, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, delivered in the Land Grant College - National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, January 17, 1934, by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations.

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The thrifty farm family has maintained a satisfying standard of dress in spite of the low incomes of the last few years. They have provided clothing for the family that would fit their budgets. The day is past when homemakers buy without a plan for spending. They are taking a more business-like attitude toward buying. There has been a change in the buying policies of the household. Instead of a search for clothing that gave an appearance of luxury, more time and study is now given to finding garments of quality and durability that will give a dollar's worth of wear and satisfaction for every dollar spent.

The well-dressed appearance of farm families today proves that after all it is not so much the amount of money that is spent, as the way in which it is used and the kind of things that are bought with it.

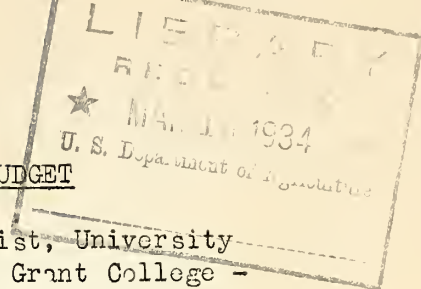
For the past four years an interest in keeping a record of the amount spent for clothing the family, has grown rapidly in Maryland. These records are studied carefully to find secrets of more economical spending. They are used as a guide in making the clothing budget for the coming year. The number of families keeping records tends to prove that it is worth while to know where the money has gone and how well certain garments have worn in order to plan further expenditures.

Each year some of the families keeping records have been good enough to lend them to the Extension Office for study and tabulation. The number of families doing this has increased from 32 in 1930 to 426 in 1933. In the four years the general average of the cost of clothing for the family has decreased from \$268.00 to \$92.90.

Of this amount 51.7% was spent for coats, dresses and suits, 27% for footwear, 9.5% for undergarments, leaving only 6% for hats and 5.5% for accessories. We do not suggest this as an ideal division of the clothing budget but it may be used as a guide in dividing a small amount of money so as to take care of the most important clothing needs of different members of the family. It would be difficult to make an ideal budget for a group of families because the percentage division of expenditures among the main clothing groups is influenced so largely by the amount of home sewing and remodeling as well as the kind, quality and quantity of garments selected.

We have all known family groups in which there were arguments as to which members spent the most money. The records are valuable in settling this question. The general average of the records tabulated show that the daughter from 15 to 18 years of age gets the largest amount. Mother gets the next largest portion and then father and the older boys. The clothing allowance for the younger children, especially the girls, is usually kept low by utilizing garments on hand.

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It has been interesting to observe some of the means of keeping the family well dressed on this small amount of money. The one most frequently noted is making clothes at home. In the more prosperous years mother and daughter almost lost the art of home sewing. Its revival has been the means of providing many attractive garments from those stored away in attics and cedar chests. The Extension Service has encouraged and supervised the making and remodeling of coats.

Three-day schools have been held for this purpose. Very attractive coats have been made for children from old coats at the cost of from five cents for thread to the cost of new lining. If we may judge by the age of garments brought to coat schools this past year, women have gone deep into the attic for garments to remodel. In a way, it has seemed a shame to rip and remodel wedding outfits of forty and fifty years ago, but the grandchildren or neighbor's children needed coats. There is something very fine in the spirit back of sacrificing these cherished garments to the ripping and snipping of remodeling.

The experience of keeping records and planning expenditures has developed an appreciation of the satisfaction which can come out of good management of financial problems. Old timers at budget making have said that the accurate and classified accounts have shown them where to make adjustments when the income varied or almost vanished. They also warn us that even when the budget is made as a result of study and analysis of records of many years that we should not expect it to be perfect or become discouraged when adjustments must be made. Time and conditions change and do must the best laid plans.

While the present supply of clothing may be low and the chances of a marked increase in the allowance for clothes for this year a bit doubtful, homemakers will find a way to provide a standard of dress which will enable all members of the family to maintain a sense of ease, self-respect and poise. The thrifty family faces facts before spending and buys according to a well-made plan.